discussions is under consideration of the reconstituted Planning Commission.

(b) The thrust of the Policy addresses mainly the following issues, namely:

- To consolidate and expand the capacity of the voluntary sector to act as a partner of the State.
- To familiarise the voluntary sector with the current and emerging economic & social issues in order to enable them to participate in policy discussions effectively.
- To increase their capacity to act as a medium for the transfer of entrepreneurship, technologies & skills.
- To enable the sector to discharge the role of a watchdog.

Special package to States

2497. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh has requested the Central Government for grant of special package to help them to boost their development activities;

(b) whether a similar request has also been received from the CM of Orissa;

(c) whether Government are aware that Orissa is the poorest of the poor and the most backward State as per Planning Commission and deserves top priority for grant of special package; and

(d) if so, time frame within which the Centre would grant financial package to this beleaguered State to tide over the crisis?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) Orissa has the highest percentage of population below the poverty line in the country. In order to supplement the efforts of the State Government in the development of backward areas, special efforts are already being made. Apart from the Central assistance given to the

States in support of State plans, funds have been specially allocated to the Government of Orissa under two components of the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana, namely, (i) Special Plan for the undivided Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput (KBK) districts; and (ii) Backward Districts initiative under which three districts of Orissa, namely, Ganjam, Mayurbhanj and Gajapati have been covered.

Criteria for BPL

†2498. DR. PRABHA THAKUR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria for assessing any person or family below the poverty line in the country;

(b) whether this assessment is carried out every year and if so, in what manner the common people are informed about the same;

(c) whether the number of persons living below the poverty line are increasing or decreasing every year; and

(d) the details thereof?.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) The Planning Commission uses per capita consumption expenditure as the criterion to assess the number of persons living below the poverty line. The monthy per capita expenditure of Rs. 49.09 in rural areas and Rs. 56.64 in urban areas have been identified as the poverty lines at national level at 1973-74 prices. These poverty lines expressed in terms of per capita consumption expenditure conform to a consumption basket, which satisfied the calorie norm of per capita daily calorie requirement of 2400 kilo calories in rural areas and 2100 kilo calories in urban areas and meets a minimum of non-food requirements, such as clothing, shelter, transport etc. Following the recommendations of the Expert Group on Estimation of Proportion and Number of Poor (accepted in 1997), State-wise poverty lines are being calculated. These poverty lines are updated for the years corresponding to the large sample survey rounds of National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) on household consumption expenditure conducted approximately every

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.